



# Endless Opportunities

Volume 23, April 2006



## SOME DAYS....THINGS JUST DON'T WORK OUT

By Ron C. Cross  
Board of Commission Chairman



The Construction and Maintenance Division of Columbia County has worked extremely hard to fast-track the beginning of the Blanchard Woods Park Project. Mark Chostner and his staff received bids last November and were concurrently pursuing permits from EPD and the Corps of Engineers. The planning was to have a contractor ready to begin work the day that the permits were received. This would save several months of the schedule and allow much needed soccer fields to be ready by the fall of this year, almost a full year ahead of the original schedule.

Ron C. Cross

Well, guess what! The permits were not received in the sixty day guarantee of the contractor bid and due to cost increases the contractor could not extend his bid price. Under Georgia law, we are only allowed to negotiate a lower price with the low bidder and cannot honor his request to increase his price to offset his material and sub-contractor increases during the almost ninety day period awaiting the permits. Our only legal option is to reject all bids and re-bid the project. We are proceeding with that re-bid immediately. There is no question that the prices will be higher, but we will find a way to proceed as soon as possible, and we are back to the original schedule of having fields ready in the fall of 2007.

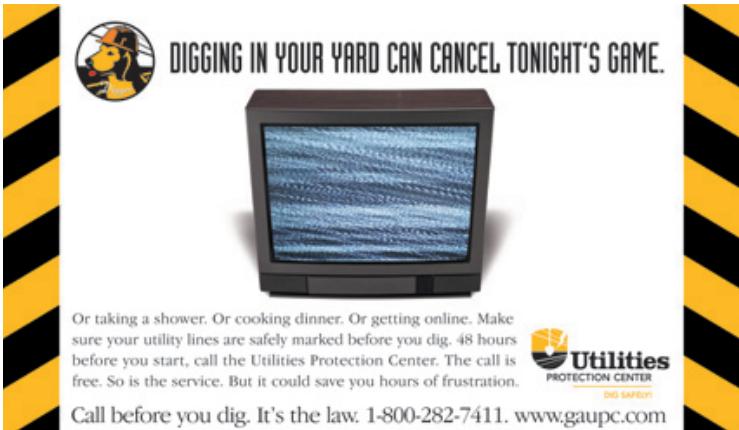
It was a good plan and well intended, but some days.....

On a similar note, it seems that our consolidation efforts will not be on the ballot this year. In reviewing the consolidation plans, some of the public meeting comments, and poll results, it appears that there are two items that did not receive the proper attention. One is the growth of the County since consolidation was a topic in 1990 and 1995. We, and especially myself, assumed that most everyone wanted consolidation as recommended in the two studies and that it would happen when the opportunity arose and that opportunity was presented with the Sandy Springs legislation approval last year. However, since 1990, there are 39,000 more people in the County that had not hear of the original study and were basically totally uninformed about the benefits of consolidation.

Secondly, during that time span, the City of Augusta and Richmond County consolidated, and no beneficial results have been seen thus far from that union. So naturally, people are hesitant to support something that has not worked next door even though our situation is totally different than theirs. A citizen poll has indicated that the majority would support consolidation if they were convinced that it would not present the same type problems observed in Richmond County.

The majority of the Commission remains convinced that consolidation is good for the County and also the Cities, as it must be beneficial to all. And we will continue our efforts and do whatever is required to allow the public to cast their vote and decide. Meetings with the legislators, the Cities, the citizens, and any number of studies and polls will be a part of this effort. It is a good idea and well intended, but some days.....

On a different note, the Commission has agreed that our capital improvements program should not exceed \$40 million financed over twelve years. This means that the maximum tax increase, if approved by the voters in November, would be approximately one mill or \$40 per year for each \$100,000 of property value. This would allow immediate start on many needed soil erosion, water, transportation, and recreation projects in the County. Public forums will be held on April 13th in the Evans Auditorium, May 11th at the Appling Courthouse, and June 8th at the Evans Auditorium. All meetings will begin at 6:00 PM. Please attend one or more of the meetings and let us know your feelings concerning these proposed improvements. Let's make this a good plan and who knows, maybe this will work out.

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## Library Grand Opening Events

### Reception, Book Signing & Author Talk

- 4/21 - 4 PM - Mary Ellen Cooper  
4/22 - 7 PM - Sue Monk Kidd  
4/23 - 1 PM - Carmen Deedy  
4/23 - 3 PM - Terry Kay  
4/25 - 7 PM - "The Dixie Divas"  
4/25 - 7 PM - Laurie Myers  
4/29 - 2 PM - Louise Shivers

### Workshops & Meetings

- 4/20 and 4/27 - 7PM - Genealogy  
4/22 - 2 PM - Local History  
4/24 - 6 PM - The Puppet Factory  
4/24 - 7 PM - Literary Guild

### Show and Concerts

- 4/20 - 7 PM - Ben & Keeter's Puppet Show  
4/20 - 7 PM - Garden Jazz Series - Air Apparent  
4/22 - 3 PM - Columbia Marionette Theater  
4/27 - 7 PM - Garden Jazz Series - Mellow D featuring Hakim Rahsul

### Friends of Library Book Sale

- 4/22 and 4/29 - 10 AM - 2 PM



## Collections Are Up, Delinquencies Are Down



Kay Allen

Less than 1000 tax liens (FiFa's) were filed with the Columbia County Clerk of Court on March 7, 2006. Although Columbia County has experienced tremendous growth in recent years (population in 2000 was near 89,000 – population in 2005 was near 101,000), delinquent taxes remain at an all time low. This speaks highly of our taxpayers who willingly and generously fund our county government.

Columbia County Tax Commissioner Kay K. Allen is tasked with collecting and disbursing County taxes for maintenance and operation, bond, fire, school, state, and the cities of Harlem and Grovetown. Over 55,000 real and personal property tax bills were created in 2005. As of February 28, 2006, less than 1/3rd of one percent remain outstanding. For the past 10 years, collections are at 99.7%.

Mrs. Allen's Delinquent Department is diligent in their efforts to contact delinquent taxpayers as is reflected in the numbers. Whether by telephone, email, letters, or notices, positive collections is the result.

If you want your taxes to be lower for 2006, now is the time to take advantage of applying for homestead exemption. You must own your home (as of January 1, 2006) and it must be your permanent residence to be eligible for a local or state exemption. There are only a couple of weeks left to apply for the 2006 exemption, so be sure and come by the office at 630 Ronald Reagan Drive, Building C to complete your application. If you have any questions, contact us at (706) 261-8299.

## Animal Care and Control



The Animal Care and Control Department is responsible for nuisance complaints, animal cruelty investigations, animal attacks which include possible rabid animals, dead animals, injured animals, and the adoption program.

In 2005, there were:

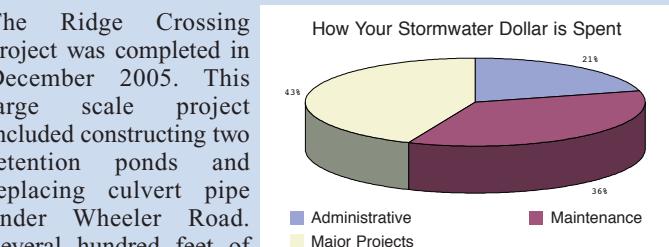
- 576 pet adoptions at the Columbia County Animal Care and Control shelter. All available pets can be viewed on the Animal Care and Control web page by logging onto Columbia County's Website at [www.columbiacountyga.gov](http://www.columbiacountyga.gov) and following the links.
- 635 pets returned to their owners. Citizens are reminded to put identification tags on their pets so the owners can be contacted immediately when their pet is picked up by this department. If you are missing a pet, please contact our office immediately (706-541-4077). You can also put up signs in your neighborhood and ads in the local newspapers.
- 783 pets turned over to the shelter. Most pets were released by their owners due to moving or they just could not take care of them. Please remember when you acquire a pet, it is for a lifetime. Make sure you are able to handle all of the responsibilities of caring for a pet including veterinarian care, proper fencing, housing, food, and daily care. There are numerous specific breed rescue organizations on the internet that can be contacted for information on a particular breed.

Spring is just around the corner! Make sure you have your pet's vaccinations up-to-date. Contact your veterinarian to see which type of heartworm preventative and flea and tick control is right for your pet.

## Stormwater Fees at Work

The Stormwater Utility performs routine maintenance on water drainage ditches and detention ponds, replaces pipe, and repairs and installs stormwater lines and catch basin boxes to control drainage in the Stormwater district. Since implementing the Stormwater Utility program, approximately 500 drainage projects have been completed including drainage ditch improvement, pipe replacements, and creek stabilization.

The Ridge Crossing project was completed in December 2005. This large scale project included constructing two retention ponds and replacing culvert pipe under Wheeler Road. Several hundred feet of 60" pipe was also installed. This is the first phase of a multi-phase drainage improvement project in the Martinez area.



## The Music Man



One of the country's best loved musicals - Meredith Willson's "The Music Man" – will be the first full-scale theatrical production at the new Jabez S. Hardin Performing Arts Center, located in the new County Library. The five performances (April 28th, April 29th, May 5th and May 6th at 8 PM and on May 7th at 3 PM) of "The Music Man" produced by Columbia County Arts, Inc. are part of a series of the Library's grand opening events.

More than sixty are in the cast and includes many children. All seats are reserved. Tickets are \$25.00 in advance and \$30.00 at the door. You can purchase tickets in advance at [www.tixonline.com](http://www.tixonline.com) or by calling (803) 278-4849. A 10% discount will be given to senior citizens, students and Columbia County Arts, Inc. members.